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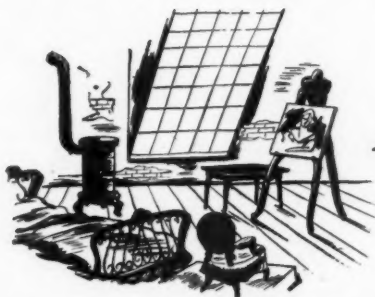


JUNE, 1948 VOL. XIV, NO. 6
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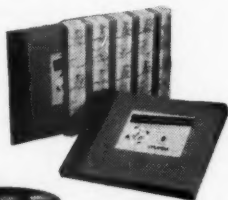
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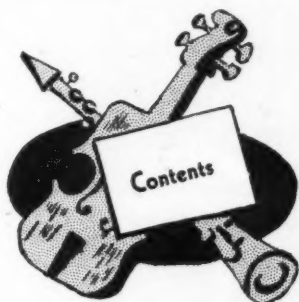
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Editorial Notes

It is not without a feeling of pride that we turn over this month's editorial space to a letter from Albert J. Franck of the International Records Agency, for what Mr. Franck has to say about the *ARG* lifts the lagging spirits of all of us. What he has to say about record companies and of one author, however, has much more than personal interest. He writes:

"Recently, I devoted a good part of a weekend to reading some of the dozen or more publications that touch upon records, which had begun to pile up ominously. I went to bed Sunday night content with a large job well done and aglow with pleasant reflections inspired by the comments of Dr. Frankenstein and the reminiscences of 'Jim' Walsh in the April *Record Guide*.

"It seems to me that Dr. Frankenstein's impatience with the manufacturing companies seems to indicate unfamiliarity with the pressures affecting their decisions. First of all, they quite legitimately want to survive, and, to do so, they must give first consideration to what is most readily marketable. They are businesses, not philanthropies, or government agencies that can be profligate with taxpayers' money. Secondly, they must respect the artists' reasonable desire that contracts be remunerative. Finally, they have to anticipate treacheries. Disloyal employees of one company have been known to divulge their employers' recording plans to its rivals, who thereupon rushed duplicate recordings into the market to cut the ground out from under the competition. This explains some very striking duplications of the past two or three years and, also, some very impressive transfers of personnel within and among the leading companies.

"As for 'Jim' Walsh—he remains the sanest of all exponents of a rational catholicity of taste and enjoyment. He is honestly and

(Continued on page 301)



The Ideal Record Cabinet (Richard Florac, Designer)

THE IDEAL RECORD CABINET

I.

Storage problems for that growing record collection are not ideally solved by record cabinet manufacturers. Most of their products are too small, necessitating the purchase of one or more units for which there is not always adequate space. Moreover, the expense of ready-made cabinets today is far out of proportion to quality and workmanship. With the minimum in manual training, one can construct the typical of such cabinets for a fraction of the store price. Also, these commercial cabinets are usually made of cheap, poorly finished wood and are generally of a depth insufficient for proper housing of albums and leading to irregularity of appearance when filled. It is understandable when the ladies protest that such a unit is an eye-sore in an otherwise well furnished living room. Though open shelves are useful, they do not protect valued records from accumulating dust.

It has been brought to our attention that many people prefer cabinets handmade, either by themselves or by carpenters. Many readers have expressed their wish to acquire a model for a really practical withal beautiful cabinet, and we have accordingly been in search of such a unit for a long time. Discussing the problem with the electronic engineer who designed the editor's personal phono-equipment—Richard Florac of the Telanserphone Company—we discovered that some years ago he had designed precisely such a cabinet, whose specifications he has graciously permitted us to publish and illustrate.

His model unit offers facilities for 100 or more albums, doors guarding against dust and—most important of all—a shelf for holding those stray discs which pile up during an evening's concert.

II.

The need for an ideal cabinet can hardly

be exaggerated. Most of us have visited a record-collecting friend who marshals odd tables, chairs, a couch, a grand piano and even the floor for laying aside discs featured in a musical soirée. Such disarray often results in extravagant accidents. These are seldom publicly recorded, though in the private histories of not a few families casualties of this nature frequently constitute the motivation for major difficulties. To our knowledge, no divorce has been granted because of broken records, yet we know of one that was obtained on the grounds of mental cruelty, the defendant being accused of thinking more of his music than of his wife. That he was an avid record fan with careless habits at least figured in the testimony.

Not only records but sometimes bric-a-brac suffer. One lady of our acquaintance who has a passion for pottery claims that her husband breaks far more of her treasures than of his records. The casualty to her favorite piece—a Dresden china figure—was owing to the supremacy of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, pushed clumsily by her spouse onto a table half the requisite size. His hasty "Thank goodness the records didn't break" was more irritating than consoling to her loss. Few wives are blessed with this lady's sense of humor or with husbands possessing the means to replace precious *objets-d'art*. Do we need to be told that blame for damage frequently falls on the innocent? The three-year-old who treads upon the corner of a disc indiscreetly left on the floor near the phonograph is hardly culpable, though papa's ire would persuade us differently. The unwitting guest who trips over a record pile is not accountable, and the host cannot expect, much less accept, redress. Too, chivalry demands that the wife playing the role of perfect hostess be forgiven for placing an unfortunate, though perfectly formed, high-heel imprint in the mathematical center of a de-

fenseless, supine disc—resulting in total breakage or an eccentric three-inch crack. More often than not, the avoidance of one catastrophe has made for another—broken glasses or bones, spilled drinks or the grapes of wrath. Besides, who can enjoy a symphony following an overture filled with off-key re-creminations?

Any record collector can upset a well ordered household in record time. Indisputable is the fact that he is happiest when surrounded with a miscellaneous array of his pet items. Men are the worst offenders, according to women, but few males are home during the day to establish counter evidence. And should the collector be entertaining a friend who reveals a sympathetic response, sheer chaos may prevail. Stamp or book collectors are equally prone to pile up Exhibits A to Z and back again, but they run less risk and rue than he who strews his discs along the primrose path of dalliance—or sheer fatigue. For not infrequently the weary host betakes himself to bed without restoring records to their proper resting places. Thus is the inevitable merely delayed. If part of a Beethoven symphony thereafter shows up in a Tchaikovsky album—that it will is a foregone conclusion—blame should not descend on her who has descended earlier to “straighten up” nor upon him who has perhaps too hastily picked up midway in his dash for the 8:15. Men, who mostly hate to admit carelessness, will often usher in those mythical creatures, household gremlins, to assume responsibility. Nor are they exclusive proprietors of unlucky leprechauns. Bewitchment is the favorite dodge of all careless souls, women included. And so on—add infinite items!

Those yearnings for solutions to these and similar delicate situations can do no better than consider the cabinet herein illustrated. It is well christened “the ideal unit”—the ingenious invention, may we remind our feminine contingent, of a well ordered masculine mind.

III.

Observe that the cabinet has doors, the top one forming that invaluable shelf space for records already played or those awaiting their turn on the turntable. Where better to arrange a contemplated program? Equipped with the proper hinges—the heavy-

duty desk type (two 6-inch), grooved into both the extended and stationary shelves—a load of 50 pounds can be supported, a truly huge pile of records. It might be well, however, not to arrange a capacity load. It is always best to restore records taken from the changer before assembling another group. A good feature of this shelf over tables, chairs, etc. is its minimizing of record scratching. A coating of formica or a cover of leather (genuine or artificial and cemented not tacked) is recommended as part of the plan. Colors contrasting to that of the cabinet finish can be effectively arranged as desired.

The cabinet can easily house 500 discs in their own albums and in 12-pocket sizes for miscellaneous selections. From 100 to 110 of these can be accommodated. Top space can be utilized for books on records and music, between bookends, or for ornaments. Indeed, it might be good strategy to delegate this area to one's wife, for women mightily love to usurp such spots to fit in with their decorative schemes. White pine—painted to match woodwork, stained or polished—is a good material for body of the cabinet. It can also be finished in Egyptian lacquer or a waxed flat finish. In the latter case, a more expensive wood with desired grain might be used. The cabinet illustrated is finished in Paris brown and black Egyptian lacquer. The bottom and the rods are the contrasting parts. The latter are screwed into the door wood and the holes over the screws are filled in with plastic wood. Chromium fixtures or brass knobs can be substituted for the rods. Doors and protruding shelf are held into position when closed with cleats or snappers. With snappers, two on each unit should be used, for the doors at top and bottom.

A good carpenter should be able to make this cabinet for less than \$75. Those who carpenter for themselves could keep costs to \$25. The overall dimensions are:

Height.....	49½ inches
Width.....	32 inches
Depth.....	15 inches

There are two recommended kinds of pine wood—ordinary, regular shelving board with solid knots or the clear pine without knots. The latter is twice the price of the former. The lesser-grade lumber would be satisfactory, if properly seasoned and pro-

vided one intends to paint, lacquer or cover with leather. With wax or stain, clear pine must be used. Before painting, a coat of good, substantial shellac should be applied and permitted to dry hard. The decorative or finishing strip across the top, above the top shelf, is 2 inches deep and designed to be morticed into the side parts.

Shelf partitions are made of plywood of $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thickness and are to be inserted in grooves made in the shelves of at least $\frac{1}{4}$ inch depth. The base is 4 inches high by 30 inches long by $14\frac{1}{2}$ inches deep. It should be of heavier material than the cabinet. The latter should be $\frac{3}{4}$ inch lumber, while the former should be 1 inch at least in thickness. The back should be plywood, concealed within the four sides; therefore allowance for its thickness must be made in trimming shelves to proper widths.

In buying lumber, it is cheaper to get long lengths and cut it to size oneself. However, one must carefully figure out lengths of boards to assure the requisite number of pieces in full. If one wishes to pay extra, the lumber mill can cut to exact lengths for you. This may be best, because gluing of the wood can also be accomplished at the mill. As no lumber is available $15\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, two 8-inch widths should be glued together and trimmed to requirements. Your actual total pine lumber requirement of the 8-inch width is approximately 50 feet. The sides of the cabinet take two boards $45\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide. The top, bottom and two shelves should be cut long enough to mortice a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch into sides. The middle shelf—where the drop door or extending shelf is mounted—is flush with the sides in width. The manner of mounting this shelf door to fit properly can be observed in the illustration. One does not require extensive knowledge of carpentry to figure out remaining construction problems. We should be pleased to help anyone desiring further assistance or suggestion.

—P.H.R. & R.D.O.

Editorial Notes

(Continued from page 297)

unashamed to experience genuine delight in the topical tunes so inimitably delivered by Billy Murray, as well as the cathedral-like complexity, vastness and infinite detail of a

major work of Bach. How healthy a mentality that discloses. How infinitely preferable it is to that state of mind which renders many another record user oblivious, if not utterly intolerant, of any form of musical expression or any personality of the performing or composing world other than that which, in his arrogant opinion is deserving of audience. Just as surely as there have been performers who brought rare talent, and indeed true artistry, to as blatant a bit of fun-making as *The Argentines*, *the Portuguese* and *the Greeks*, so there have been elaborate fakers and pompous mountebanks who have essayed recordings of more pretentious music, from the *Grand Canyon Suite* to the *Grieg Piano Concerto in A minor*. In short, merit and meretriciousness exist at all levels of musical expression, and the truly eclectic music lover, like Walsh, accepts and frankly enjoys the best at each. He asks no questions except, incidentally, as to the vintage of a record or the country of origin. He does not quibble over the aspect of its label, or the design on the back if it is a single-sided disc. The thing that counts above all else is the *performance*. This is the conviction which descends upon the thoughtful reader of Walsh's article.

"In printing that article, *American Record Guide* once again demonstrated its superior soundness and stability. It remains the sanest, most constructive record review of the western world. It is 'of age' and, with the dignity of maturity, it fosters the uplifting and expansion of its readers' perceptions and pleasures in music. To have a constructive purpose like that seems to me to set the *Record Guide* apart from its flamboyant, clamorous and controversial contemporaries whose concept of obligation is, by hook or crook, to give the subscribers 'something for the money', no matter how sophomoric."

* * *

The uncertainty of the record business these days continues to prevent a set publishing date. As late as June 5, we had not received the major portion of Victor's June releases and one from the May. The co-operation of former days seems retarded in modern times and the problems of production seem to be manifold. Only one company these days operates on an uninterrupted schedule.



PERSONAL PREFERENCES

By Edward Sackville-West

It is always a pleasure to present to our readers an article by Edward Sackville-West. As music critic of the English journal The New Statesman and Nation, he has long evidenced himself as one of the most astute critics on reproduced music. In acceding to this article, Mr. West observed parenthetically, "the purpose seems to me very egotistical, but I suppose that is really the idea". Need we protest this assertion if we concede with Alexander Pope that "every man has just as much vanity as he wants understanding"? Surely the things nearest and dearest to us justifiably inflate our ego.—Ed.



To write an article like this is in some sort to take a busman's holiday. Relieved of the responsibility of judging recording values, of comparing artists and orchestras, etc. etc., the musical journalist is (or so I take it) invited to indulge in the irresponsible fun of displaying purely personal caprice. Well, after combing my private catalogue, making a list, revising and erasing, I find my-

self left with twenty-two miscellaneous items, most of them vocal (although I am on the whole less interested in the voice than in several other instruments), and many of them either unobtainable at present or long deleted from any catalogue. Dividing my list into three sections, I shall take the orchestral records first, the vocal second, and the solo instrumental last. [The record list is at the end of the article.—Ed.]

Personal preference, in music, must first of all be for some tune or other, and here I plump unhesitatingly for the Andante from Mozart's *Piano Concerto in C* (K 467)¹. This long, complex melody, with its pathetic minor sequence debouching into a major conclusion of contented resignation, has long seemed to me Mozart's supreme achievement in its kind—more touching, even, than anything in the operas. To follow Schnabel's management of this lovely tune is to understand the nature of complete accord between composer and executant. From this masterpiece to Weber's little *Concertino*² for clarinet and orchestra is a considerable step, no doubt,—but not in kind. Charmingly lyrical, and as elegant as a Regency drawing-

room, the *Concertino* appeals to me partly because it conveys perfectly the atmosphere of a period in which I should have liked to live. However, if one lives in England, it is not necessary to go backwards in time in order to enjoy a Whistler nocturne. Debussy's *Gigues*³ (it is based, as you know, on a tune called *The Keel-Row*) is avowedly an evocation of London—perhaps on a misty autumn evening, with coal barges ghostly along the river, a blurred stream of lights on the north embankment, a coffee-stall lurid with acetylene, and the distant sound of traffic on Ludgate Hill. Vaughan Williams has given his version (and a very good one) of a similar scene, in the Scherzo of his *London Symphony*; but Debussy's more exquisite impression, with its marvellously apt and economical orchestration, holds for me the essence of a city I both love and hate. Nor can I easily imagine a better performance than the recorded one.

Impressionism

Perhaps Spaniards feel the same about Falla's *Nights in the Garden of Spain*⁴: I do not know Spain well enough to say. The work appeals to me powerfully for two reasons: because, like *Gigues*, it is a model of taste, and because I love what is truly picturesque in any art—the moment of romantic delight expressed with sensuous daring. The Delius *Violon Concerto*⁵ is no less picturesque, but its manner exceeds what a Latin artist would naturally permit himself. This extraordinary rhapsody has a poetic quality that is characteristic only of British and German music: the omnivorous revery of which, in literature, De Quincey, Senancour and Novalis were the masters. The concerto easily becomes cloying, if the soloist is not entirely in sympathy with the spirit of the music. There are now two extant recordings, of which I unhesitatingly prefer that in which Albert Sammons (for whom the work was written) is the soloist. This performance makes of the work an undying sunset in which a single lark remains suspended, as if intoxicated by light and color. The last page of this concerto is one of the most pathetic and touching that Delius ever wrote: I can never listen to it without coming near to tears.

This list would be bound to contain something by Benjamin Britten, because I rate

him higher than any other living composer of his age; and if I choose a part of his *Serenade* for Tenor, Horn and Strings, the reason is not merely that this particular work happens to be dedicated to me, so that I have a special affection for it: although he has since written much—in some ways more important—music, I doubt if Britten will ever have a happier inspiration than his arioso setting of Keats's sonnet to Sleep⁶, with which the *Serenade* ends. This is not the most generally favored section of a popular work, but I believe it to be musically the finest.

Some Lieder

From Britten to the great Lieder writers is a natural step, within the wide bounds of the lyrical art. From the embarrassing riches of the gramophone library I choose (with many a backward glance at other things) Schubert's *Der Hirt auf den Felsen*, in the recording made by Elisabeth Schumann⁷—an arbitrary enough choice, governed by delight in Mme. Schumann's impeccable delineation of the lovely theme, and in the happy interplay of voice and clarinet. Passing to Schumann, I find less hesitation here in choosing the same singer's record of the little *Ständchen*⁸, which is a perfect example of the mysterious power of a simple bass figure, in the accompaniment, to "make" a song. This invention is, I suppose, rooted in Schubert's genius; in any case, it came to stay, for we find it in all the Lieder writers who followed Schubert—in Mahler, for instance, whose *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen* holds the essence of that misunderstood composer's tender nostalgia. Kersten Thorborg's voice⁹ has the depth and smoothness that uncover the luxurious darkness of this beautiful song. Hugo Wolf is almost as difficult to choose from as Schubert. I have at least half a dozen "personal preferences" here; but the one most characteristic of the composer would be, I think, *Auf eine Wanderung*. This song has the (for me) considerable advantage of a "symphonic" development, which gives an astonishing emotional scope to the sense of the poem. Elena Gearhardt has recorded this song with her customary sensibility to every nuance; but this is really a man's song, and I greatly dislike men's songs interpreted by women, and *vice versa*. The Telefunken recording, made by that most lyrical and expressive tenor, Karl

Schmitt-Walter¹⁰, is among the best *Lieder* records I know.

I never heard an entirely satisfactory recorded performance of the *Dichterliebe*, but Panzéra's set of Fauré's *La Bonne Chanson*¹¹ is—from the point of view of interpretation—inimitable; and the work itself is the *Dichterliebe* of France. Since Schumann no composer has produced a series of songs describing the arc of love with anything approaching the rapt intensity and forward sweep of Fauré's cycle.

For some reason I have never been able to fathom, Madeleine Grey's astounding records of the *Chants d'Auvergne* (arr. Canteloumbe) were never widely published and have now disappeared with scarcely a trace. This is a tragedy, for the lovely tunes are imaginatively (if rather too elaborately) arranged, and Mlle Grey's splendidly brave voice makes us see that remote and hilly landscape of central France. Of all these tunes the one which moves me most is called *Bailero*¹². (Incidentally, this was used by William Walton for the French scenes in the film of Henry V.).

The Art of Melba

Although I am not particularly fond of pre-electric records, no musician can be insensitive to the marvellous singing they immortalise. Coupling this feature with a low taste for concert waltzes, I arrive at Melba's 1910 rendition of Ardit's *Se saran Rose*¹³. In the the 1904 issue of this delicious absurdity Melba takes the high D at the end; but the surface of that disc is really too rough to be endured and (exceptionally in the case of florid stuff) the later recording shows no deterioration in the quality of Melba's voice.

I come finally to what are possibly the most personal of my preferences. A musician will always feel most deeply about the instrument he happens to play, and the piano discs I am about to mention are favorites with me, not so much because of the music itself, but because the performances come nearest to my own ideal. First, then, Robert Casadesus's three records of *Sonatas* by Scarlatti¹⁴. I suppose a purist might object to this kind of music being played on the piano at all; but, aside from this view, I cannot imagine a performance more beautifully in style, or distinguished by a technique more consummate in ease and glittering

clarity. And I should say precisely the same of Wanda Landowska's recording (on the harpsichord) of Bach's *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue*¹⁵, adding that in this case the older instrument gives the musical texture an orchestral splendor and variety that seems obviously what Bach intended.

Once before in this journal I had occasion to single out for praise Solomon's recording of Beethoven's *Sonata quasi una Fantasia in C sharp minor*¹⁶. I reiterate now my admiration for his performance, especially in the first movement, where the unusually slow tempo is justified by perfect control and conveys, as no other rendering I ever heard, the intimate sense of this movement.

For the performance alone I should put Arthur Rubinstein's two sets of the *Mazurkas* as high as possible among the electric issues of Chopin's works. Unfortunately, the recording is so shallow and wooden that I cannot honestly include any of these discs among my favorites. Instead I will end with a piece of romantic music that has, perhaps, no great intrinsic value, but delights the ear through the charm exercised by wonderful virtuosity. I mean Liszt's *Ricordanza Etude*, in the recording by Egon Petri¹⁷. It is with some satisfaction that I conclude this article on the name of the pianist whom I consider the greatest of his age.

Record List

1. Artur Schnabel, London Symphony Orch., Malcolm Sargent, conductor. In Victor set 486 (H.M.V. disc DB3101).
2. Reginald Kell with orchestra, conducted by Walter Goehr. Columbia disc 69869-D (Eng. Col. DX942).
3. San Francisco Orch., Pierre Monteux, conductor. In Victor set 954 (H.M.V. disc DB6182).
4. Clifford Curzon, National Symphony Orch., Jorda, conductor. Decca set EDA-10.
5. Albert Sammons, Liverpool Phil. Orch., Sargent, conductor. Columbia disc 672 (Eng. Col. discs DX1160-62).
6. Peter Pears, Dennis Brain and Boyd Neel String Orch., Britten, conductor. Decca set EDA-7.
7. Elisabeth Schumann with Reginald Kell and Gerald Moore. Victor disc 14815 (H.M.V. DB3317).
8. Elisabeth Schumann with Gerald Moore. H.M.V. DA1355.
9. Kersten Thorborg, Vienna Phil. Orch., conducted by Bruno Walter. Columbia disc 4201-M (Eng. Col. LB45).
10. Karl Schmitt-Walter. Telefunken A2540.
11. Charles Panzera. In Victor set 478 (H.M.V. DB-5020-22).
12. Madeleine Gray with orch. Eng. Col. LFX27.
13. Nellie Melba with orch. Victor disc 88076 or 6220.
14. Robert Casadesus. Columbia set 372 (Eng. Col. LX778-80).
15. Wanda Landowska. In former Victor set 323 (H.M.V. DB993/54).
16. Solomon. H.M.V. C3455.
17. Egon Petri. Eng. Col. LX846.

Japan and the Record Collector

By William E. Schultz, Capt., D.C.

It is disheartening, to most record purchasers, to read through a book or article eulogizing certain recordings, only to find that as an afterthought, the reviewer has added "not available at present." This frustrating experience, common to us all, is unknown to Americans in Japan.

The war has had considerable effect on the Japanese record industry through bomb damage, power restrictions, and shellac shortages — however, with searching, almost all pre-war recordings of importance can be found, usually with excellent surfaces. On domestic Japanese pressings the outstanding achievements of Polydor, Telefunken, Victor, Columbia, Parlophone, and others, were available — on shellac which had no peer. Pre-war Columbia recordings, "The Records Without Scratch," lived up to the slogan, with surfaces surpassed only by vinylite. Therefore, when such treasures as Madeleine Grey's *Chants D'Auvergne* and the Atterberg *Symphony No. 6* are found, it is cause for real celebration. In addition, Nipponese companies did such pioneer recordings as Saint-Saens' *Piano Concerto No. 5*, and Mahler's *Symphony No. 4* (the latter years before the new Walter-NY Philharmonic version).

Japanese addicts of Western music, though not large in number, have an insatiable musical appetite. Consequently the number of pressings of an item would be small, but the variety of music great. Japanese catalogs, (English editions were printed), compare favorably in size with American, and give the impression of tremendous production. This is not the case — each pressing was around 500 in number, which makes even a fourth or fifth issue equal in quality to many first American pressings.

Finding desirable recordings is easy, since almost all Japanese dealers know a smattering of English, and are familiar with the names of the great masters, as well as with artists — the Budapest Quartet, Cortot, Teyte, Busch, Serkin, and all others. The EMI gramophonic union of England, more than any other single factor, has been responsible for Japanese record issues. American Victor was next in importance, followed by American Columbia, Telefunken and Polydor. Many wartime Victor pressings had the familiar RCA legend on the label and blank sides. It was a surprise to learn that at the time of such campaigns as Okinawa and Saipan, Japanese Columbia at Kawasaki was pressing the Walter-Philharmonic-Symphony *Erica*, the Stravinsky-Philharmonic *Petrouchka*, and the Cleveland Orch. Weinberger *Chestnut Tree*. (It is doubtful that recordings of Japanese origin were pressed in America at this time.)

Another surprise was the appearance on Columbia of recordings that in America had been Victor's pride and joy; among these — Furtwaengler's *Pathétique* and Beethoven's *Fifth*, and Mahler's *Ninth Symphony*.

Wartime record production was high, but the quality of the shellac was often poor. Also, during this period of mental and physical strain, a number of gramophonic crimes were committed. Victor recorded Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* with a xylophone and small orchestra; however, even this spine-chilling combination paled when compared to the last movement of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, sung in Japanese. Actually the recording is good, done with a large orchestra and well recorded — but the wartime shellac and Japanese phonetics gives an excruciating experience.

The historical record collector can have a field day in Japan. Since 1905, records and matrices have been imported, and evidently appreciated by Japanese collectors. Several large albums of historical recordings were released prior to the war, and even pressed in wartime. Included are records by Lilli Lehmann, Culp (her rare *Frauenliebe und Leben*), Ysaye, Busoni, etc. Numerous publications have appeared — and one of them is a fabulous book, (unfortunately only in Japanese), which reproduces in color many of the labels of rare recordings (1940).

The war completely destroyed Polydor, but Victor suffered only production damage, and already has managed to recover to the extent of a 100,000 monthly production. Columbia, undamaged, presses 300,000 monthly, and Telefunken, which survived intact, produces 150,000 each month. As soon as power and shellac shortages are overcome, production will increase greatly. Victor has recently completed a new recording studio, and under the terms of a new contract, will even press post-war American recordings.

I am indebted to Mr. F. Fujita of Tokyo, the founder of the Japanese Gramophone Societies, for much of the material in this brief article. Mr. Fujita has a book on historical records, an unpublished manuscript entitled *Caruso and His Records*, and has 30,000 manuscript sheets on historical recordings. In wartime he had to play his foreign language recordings softly, or neighbors would stone his home. Evidently they didn't object to his many copies of the *American Music Lover* and *The Gramophone*, since as we well know, political intrigue is at a minimum in these publications.

If there were a tunnel connecting Japan with America, it would be filled constantly with the autos of drooling record collectors, who would return homeward greatly satisfied. When tourist travel is resumed, there will still be thousands of magnificent recordings left for the first fortunate few; and when importations are allowed the record collector will be well served. So don't forget Japan — probably the last source of supply for poor discouraged American collectors.



SHAKESPEARE: Soliloquies from *Hamlet*; read by John Gielgud; Decca set DAU-7, two 12-inch Vinylite discs, price \$5.09.

▲Maturity has added another string to that taut, throbbing bow which is John Gielgud's voice. It now has greater range both in tone and suggestion. His reading of the seven passages in this album is superior to his reading of them in 1936, when he brought *Hamlet* to Broadway—and that reading was as near perfection as it was though any actor could come. His one fault then was an extreme vocal beauty and sweetness exceeding belief. The spiritual rage and mordancy of *Hamlet* were notes which must have been faint on his copy of Shakespeare's score. He did not sound them to their fullest volume, and it was not odious to compare him with another artist, say Olivier.

Gielgud's portrayals were ever an exhibition of gems in which the sardonyx were suggested rather than displayed. That perfect voice can now bite—as it bit so penetratingly into the delicate spleen of Congreve's Valentine last season. The teeth are even sharper today and a proper retort for the most astringent language ever written for the stage. The larynx is at last a lyre with percussive attachments. Thus, this set enables one of the truly great actors of all time to rewrite a role that was virtually flawless anyway, whereas most Shakespearean albums merely reproduce the faults or virtues of a public performance.

In this album he is presumably unhindered by any save his own direction, and I detect a cogency even subtler than he achieved on the stage. This may be one of the first instances wherein an actor has known what to do with the command "About, my brain" in the *Now I am alone* soliloquy. It usually comes out an amorphous ejaculation hinting at a headache in *Hamlet*. Here it is as obviously written—a command by *Hamlet* to his own brain to turn from the poetic to the pragmatic. This would be thinking too precisely on the critical except that I cite it only to suggest the overall care

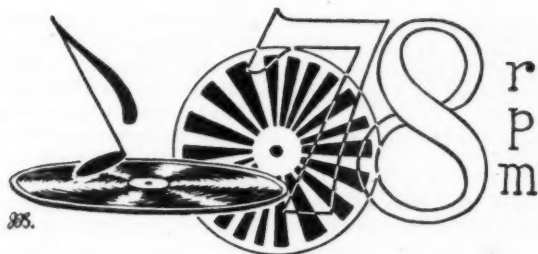
with which the artist approaches his material. Also, unlike many actors noted for their pathos, no tear in Gielgud's voice was ever shed by crocodile. Pathos and cogency are melded expressly and most admirably in the *O all you host of heaven, Forty thousand brothers* and *What a piece of work is man* passages, which round out three disc sides. How exciting to hear the pathetic catch in the voice at the words "the beauty of the world" just before the immense scorn of his "quintessence of dust." The same throbbing hum with his b's takes the curse of familiarity from "To be or not to be"—and all the strophe boundaries are clearly distinguished in this excerpt, which contains in the quizzical delivery of "bare bodkin" an excellent instance of the actor's increased capacity for effective tonelessness and a prodigal snuffing out of sweetness when it in turn might kill a line.

The album notes (on play and player) should be ignored as misleading, vague and unindicative of either Gielgud's or *Hamlet*'s stature. But all who love music and consider the voice a major instrument should acquire this chance to meet the complete *Hamlet*—all his wit, his mordancy, his music, his virility and his torrent of love left with no place to flow. Gielgud's recitation does not, as do the notes, compound the scholar's sin of limiting the play to a conflict between thought and action. This is the real *Hamlet*, a man whose *hamartia* was his very perfection in an imperfect world and whose tale as told by Shakespeare is literature's most perfect statement of the artist-versus-the-world theme. —Robert D. Olsen

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RECORD NOTES AND REVIEWS



CORELLI: *Concerto Grosso in D major*; EIAR Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Carlo Zecchi. Cetra discs BB-25125/26, price \$5.00.

GERMINIANI: *Concerto Grosso, Op. 3, No. 2*; String Quartet, cembalo and string orchestra, conducted by Carlo Zecchi. Cetra discs BB-25112/13, price \$5.00.

PERGOLESI: *Concertino No. 5 in E flat major*; String Orchestra (Sinfonica della Radio Italiano), conducted by M. o Fighera. Cetra disc BB-25212, price \$2.50.

▲ There is dignity and spaciousness in Corelli's orchestral music. He was a renowned violinist, and his string writing is conspicuous for its songful purity in the solo parts and for clarity of texture in the *continuo* or accompanying strings. The *D major concerto*, for two solo violins and cello with string *continuo*, is the first of twelve concerti grossi forming his *Opus 6*. It is one of eight for church usage, hence does not contain dance patterns. Both the first and second movements have slow introduction followed by buoyant and graceful allegros. The third movement is a *Largo* of true classical beauty, full of that spiritual pathos which Corelli

could so often succinctly summon. The fourth movement is an elaborate *Allegro* with fascinating canonic devices, and the finale is a more florid treatment of the same tempo. This is concerto *grosso* writing at its best, music which is immediately engaging and often spiritually moving. It is imaginatively performed with a deft nuancing of the melodic lines.

Geminiani, also a notable violinist, was fonder of technical display than Corelli, and his *concerto grosso* is a more pretentious score. It opens with an impressive *Largo*, where sentiment rather than dignity prevails. Its two fast movements, second and fourth, are more animated and broadly developed than Corelli's *Allegros*. The heart of this composition lies in the soaring spirit of the *Adagio* with its poignant beauty of solo lines and rich organ-like *continuo*. This is a most welcome addition to early 18th-century orchestral music on records. It retains a melodic freshness which is rewarding, and is the best of the composer's music so far recorded. Zecchi gives it an expressive reading.

The Pergolesi is less conspicuous music but nonetheless attractive for its delicacy of workmanship and ingratiating melodies. It is divided into four short movements—*Affettuoso*, *Preso*, *Largo* and *Vivace*. The performance is a competent one.

The recording in all is admirably accom-

plished, and the record surfaces are much better than earlier Cetras. At present these works are available only in manual sequence but later will be repressed by Cetra-Doria in automatic sequence.

(The Corelli is published in miniature score by Bronde Bros.)

HANDEL: *Christmas Music from The Messiah* and TRADITIONAL: *Russian Christmas Music*; Leopold Stokowski and his Symphony Orchestra. Victor disc 11-9837, price \$1.25.

▲This disc included in Victor's December list did not reach us until this past month. Both selections are transcriptions by Stokowski in which he contrives the effect of playing on an organ. The delicate adjustment of tonalities in the Handel, more familiarly known as the *Pastoral Symphony*, are quite lovely. In the Russian music the tonalities are glorified with a highly dramatic contrast between string and brass choir. Stokowski has previously recorded both compositions but the realism of the present reproduction gives precedence to these versions.

HANDEL: *Water Music—Suite* (four sides); *Concerto Grosso in D minor, Op. 6, No. 10* (three sides); *Largo from Xerxes* (1 side); Chicago Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Désiré Defauw (John Weicher, solo violinist, in the *Largo*). Victor set DM-1208, price \$6.00 (manual set \$7.00).

▲Clarity of orchestral texture does not suffice in the music of Handel, nor does reproductive brilliance enhance its essential qualities. The spirit of the composer seems to evade Defauw, especially his lyrical graciousness. Compared with the Hamilton Harty version of the *Water Music* and the Busch rendition of the *Concerto Grosso*, these unimaginative performances are little better than orchestral exercises in metronomic exactitude. The solo violin traversal of the *Largo* may have popular appeal, but even it does not rear its head auspiciously above other similar versions.

MILHAUD: *Symphony No. 1* (7 sides) and *In Memoriam* (March) (1 side); Columbia Broadcasting Symphony, conducted by Darius Milhaud. Columbia set M or MM-704, price \$6.00.

▲The histories of both works have bearing on their significance. In the summer of 1939 Milhaud accepted a commission to write a symphony for the 50th anniversary season (1940-41) of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, but the outbreak of the war affected him so greatly he was unable for two months to do any creative work. Resuming composition in the fall, Milhaud says the symphony proved "an intellectual and spiritual lifesaver" to him. The march was written for a commemoration of Pearl Harbor Day.

In Milhaud's first full symphony, each movement may be said to create a mood which, unlike those in his tantalizing, all-too-brief *Symphonies for Small Orchestra*, is intensified and expanded by a more meaningful creative impulsion. In the three rapid movements the impetus is wholly elative and spontaneous. Only in the slow movement does the disposition of the music change, and the emotional gravity hint of war-thoughts. The chorale theme of this section creates a solemn, almost dirge-like undercurrent of emotion, while an alternating melody seems to conciliate with its tender sweetness. The first of the four movements is a pasturale, symbolizing the unfettered joys of the countryside with melodies that dance as well as sing. This movement, like the others, suggests a state of being rather than depicts actuality. The short second movement is buoyant and rollicking. The composer describes it as "rather dramatic and robust with a fugue in the middle". The finale, described as "also a pasturale, but more vigorous and joyous than the first", has strength and driving energy. There is a prevailing lyrical graciousness to much of Milhaud's thematic material. Spontaneity prevails in all except the slow movement albeit suggesting a restlessness of spirit. Even the intellectual devices, like the canonic treatment of the second theme in the opening movement and the fugue in the second, do not disturb the music's flow. One wonders whether a pause or rest might not have well served the music on occasion.

The *March* is more dissonant than the symphony—with a poignant gravity in keeping with its memorial purpose. The composer is a competent and forceful conductor, who apparently knows the effects he wishes to attain. The works are tellingly performed and impressively recorded. —P.H.R.

OFFENBACH: *Orpheus in Hades—Overture*; The Boston "Pops" Orchestra, conducted by Arthur Fiedler. Victor disc 12-0240, price \$1.25.

▲ This overture, long one of the delights of the concert hall, will be welcomed by many in this new and very lifelike recording. Victor had a previous performance by Constant Lambert and the London Philharmonic Orchestra (disc 12604), issued in March, 1940, which as a recording still commands admiration. Some detail in the older performance remains unchallenged by the new, especially "the feathery phrasing of the solo violin". This music should provide nostalgic memories for old-timers, for did it not often serve as an accompaniment "in the happy days of the silent films"? —P.G.

RAVEL: *Rapsodie Espagnole*; Boston Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Serge Koussevitzky. Victor set DM-1200, two discs, price \$3.00 (Manuel set, price \$4.00).

▲ Born near the Spanish border of a mother who was of Basque origin, Ravel was allied with the music of Spain from his childhood. His *Spanish Rhapsody*, written in his thirty-second year, is a more attractive and convincing engrossment with the Spanish idiom than his *Bolero*. It aims for a contrast of sensibility and exotic brilliance. It is vividly colorful and rhythmically fascinating. Its orchestration is a study in virtuosic effects, and Ravel employs all the instruments in a most imaginative manner.

There are four movements—*Prélude à la Nuit, Malaguena, Habanera* and *Feria*—linked by the motto theme of the first which reappears in all save the *Habanera*. This is music which the Boston Symphony with its perfection of ensemble and highly skilled soloists plays with persuasive expression and brilliance. All of which is due to its knowing conductor. The realistic recording is a decided advance over the old Stokowski-Philadelphia Orchestra version. —P.H.R.

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ROSSINI: *William Tell—Overture*; Andre Kostelanetz and his Orchestra. Columbia set U or MU-293, two 10-inch discs, price \$2.75.

▲Kostelanetz always gets good recording—somehow his fondness for lush strings makes for a rich sounding reproduction which appeals to many. Admiring the Beecham version of this overture, with its refinement of detail and its controlled dramatic elements, Kostelanetz's more patent treatment of this overly familiar score would hardly urge me to transfer my affections. —P.G.

STRAUSS: *Ein Heldenleben, Op. 40* (Tone Poem); Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Rritz Reiner. Columbia set M or MM-748, five discs, price \$7.10.

▲Reiner has always been a fine interpreter of Strauss. Being much of an orchestral technician himself, the conductor knows how to handle Strauss' massive scores with their exacting technical intricacies. Here, there is clarity of texture and a good deal of alert pointing up of detail. Too, the recording does justice to the conductor, sounding on the whole more sonorous than some of the early Pittsburgh-Symphony releases. This set will prove a rival for the Ormandy-Philadelphia one, though the latter is still a satisfying recording. Reiner seems to me to be a little freer in his rhythms, expressing greater dramatic intensity. His solo violinist—Hugo Kolberg—adds much to the high quality of the performance. It remains a pity that the Rodzinski-Cleveland Orchestra set turned out so badly for Columbia, since Rodzinski revealed sympathetic insight to the score suggesting a close study of the famous Mengleberg version. Strauss wrote this work at the turn of the century and dedicated the score to the noted Dutch conductor. The latter, performed the tone poem, according to one leading critic, "with a contagious conviction and with the skill of a conjuror". The Mengleberg set, made in 1928 when he was associated with the Philharmonic Symphony, is still highly regarded by many, but for me the conductor's unstinted dramatic urge has always seemed a bit ponderous and his convictions regarding the music not completely converting. The most enduring part of the work, is the contemplative, peaceful ending, which Reiner as much as anyone performs with sympathetic insight.

Heldenleben, in my estimation, is wearing thin. I think the English critic, Neville Cardus, has succinctly described it. It is a self-portrait "with a closeness of detail rare in music, seen from the outside, composed much as a man takes his own photograph in a room. There is no objective or internal revelation. It is an exciting panorama of adventures in music and orchestration; nothing more and nothing less." Its enjoyment hinges on knowledge of its story—it is that kind of music.

STRAUSS: *Der Rosenkavalier—Suite*; The Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia set M or MM-742, three discs, price \$4.75.

▲This is—I am told—a recent suite arranged by Strauss himself for concert performance. Neither the notes nor record labels enumerate the various sections. They are the Introduction to Act I, part of the duet between Octavian and Sophie in Act II, Waltz Movements, part of the Trio and final Duet and a coda accentuating the Viennese waltz music that plays a prominent role in the score. In September 1945 the Goossens-Cincinnati Symphony version of Dorati's suite from this opera was issued by Victor. I found the waltz music at the end less pleasing to my ears than the finale of Act III which Strauss used in the suite he recorded in London nearly 20 years ago. However, I suspect Dorati and the composer are justified in catering to the general public—not to forget the conductor.

The recording in this set is greatly preferable to the earlier one. There is no diffusion of tone and the sumptuous beauty of the Philadelphia Orchestra is substantiated throughout the richly harmonic score. Ormandy plays this music with manifest pleasure. One suspects he knows the opera well and has a great affection for it. In the waltz sections he lets loose, substantiating the music's elation. While I can admire this sequence of operatic excerpts, particularly in such radiantly realistic reproduction, I find the purely vocal music loses some of its intimacy and charm without the singers. For my own part, I should prefer to devise a suite of my own choice from my collection of records, using vocal as well as orchestral selections. However, those who like an op-

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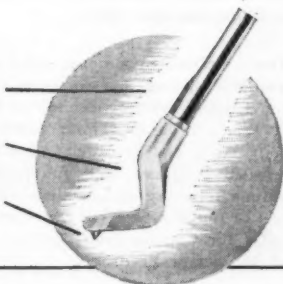
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eratic pot-pourri by symphony orchestra will find good reasons to welcome this set.

—P.H.R.

STRAVINSKY: *Divertimento* from *The Fairy's Kiss* (*Baiser de la Fée*); played by the RCA Victor Orchestra conducted by Stravinsky. Victor set DM-1202, three discs, price \$4.75.

▲"Inspired by the muse of Tchaikovsky," says the score, the Tchaikovsky muse in this instance being mostly unfamiliar songs and piano pieces. Stravinsky wrote the work in 1928, for the dancer Ida Rubinstein, basing it on Hans Andersen's fairy tale *The Ice Maiden* and also on a selection of Tchaikovsky's music. For those who are interested, the latter's contributions include a *Humoresque* (Op. 10, No. 2), the *Natha Valse*, the *Nocturne* (Op. 19, No. 4), the *Scherzo humoristique* and the song *Ah qui brula d'amour*. The title of *Divertimento* for the concert suite is Stravinsky's own.

In his recent survey of Stravinsky's music, Eric Walter White sounds unhappy when he discusses *Baiser de la Fée*. "... it will be found that the concert suite (entitled *Divertimento*) fails to hold the listeners' concentrated attention and is very small beer indeed when compared with the concert suites of any of the other ballets." Not in this listener's opinion; and beer is not the exact descriptive fluid. Champagne, perhaps; a very dry brand. It is hard to define the fascination that this suite can give after a few hearings. Tchaikovsky would undoubtedly have been paralyzed had he heard what Stravinsky did to his simple little salon pieces: the acerbic harmonies, the rhythmic darts, the hoarse yet highly articulate orchestration.

It cannot be denied that this is distorted music, but the distortions are purposeful, and a very shrewd musical mentality is shaping the angular lines. Tchaikovsky often comes through; there is no mistaking the melodic fragments. Of course, Tchaikovsky or no, the idiom and treatment are Stravinsky's, and the juxtaposition of the two composer's styles forms curious patterns. *Divertimento* is in many respects a humorous piece—unintentionally so, perhaps—and also a melodious, attractive one to anybody in the least sympathetic to Stravinsky's methods. It most certainly is worth a few hear-

ings; and those few hearings should develop into honest admiration.

There previously was a single disc of selections from this ballet—Dorati and the London Philharmonic, released early in 1940. That was an excellent disc, and even included a section not found in Stravinsky's new recording, which contains the *Sinfonia*, *Danses Suisses*, *Scherzo* and *Pas de deux*. Stravinsky's conducting may be assumed to be authoritative, and the sound has been handsomely reproduced.

—H.C.S.

SULLIVAN: *Iolanthe—Overture*; Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent. Columbia disc 72526-D, price \$1.25.

▲I cannot say the overtures to the Gilbert and Sullivan operas are especially exciting, and having just listened to an Offenbach opus, I found this rather tame music. The English spirit seems rather prosaic after the French. However, the disc can be recommended to those who like such music as performance and recording are capable jobs.

—P.G.



RAVEL: *Piano Concerto* (5 sides); and **BERNSTEIN:** *Nos. 4 and 5 of Three Anniversaries* (1 side); played by Leonard Bernstein, who also conducts the Philharmonic Orchestra of London. Victor set DM-1209, price \$4.75 (also set DV-15, three discs, price \$7.00).

▲Since 1932 there has been no recording of the Ravel Piano Concerto (not to be confused with the *Concerto for the Left Hand*), the Marguerite Long-Maurice Ravel set being released that year. Miss Long is an admirable artist, and the set had historical interest since the composer also was the conductor. Recording has gone a long way since then, however, and the sound of that 1932 set is feeble compared to the high-fidelity splendors that Bernstein glories in.

Fortunately for all concerned, Bernstein also is an excellent executant. He has an affinity to this concerto, which is pretty much of his own generation. He responds

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to the jazz elements in the first and third movements, he delicately articulates the winding line of the slow movement, and his tempos are just. The old bugaboo of synchronized attacks—the biggest problem of the pianist-conductor—is successfully met, and even the dynamic levels are well considered. It is hard, indeed to find much fault with Bernstein as pianist or Bernstein as conductor. Altogether a remarkably talented musician.

The last movement has wonderful instrumental color, and here is one of the few places that one could take issue with the pianist half of the Bernstein personality. He becomes a little steely in the runs, as though he were playing Stravinsky. Obviously he is trying for absolute clarity, but a little pedal would not have made the line muddy and would have softened the effect.

The concerto, composed in 1931, was Ravel's last work but one (*Don Quichotte à Dulcinée* was the *opus ultimum*). It is a grateful work to hear,* and its impeccable workmanship, its logic and sense of balance, show that there was no lessening of the power of Ravel's mentality toward the end. As in the *Concerto for the Left Hand*, much has been made of the jazz influences. The jazzmen triumphantly uphold it as a prime example of the influence of their art on another. Maybe; but if Ravel's intellectualized concept of what constituted American jazz has anything in common with the real thing, I'll build a shrine to St. Bix and Lord Henry and Duke Fats with my own hands.

The final side is devoted to two of Bernstein's *Seven Anniversaries*, one of which he recorded previously for Hargail. —H.C.S.

SCHUMANN: *Concerto in A minor, Op. 54*
Rudolf Serkin (piano) with the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia set MV or MMV-734 (plastic), four discs, price \$8.85 (shellac \$5.85).

▲Serkin endows this warmly poetic and sweetly lyrical score with the true feeling of the romanticist. There is breath of style, comprehension of sentiment, and refinement of taste. This Viennese schooled pianist has the true "feel" for the music, and he brings

to it a poise that belongs to his training. This performance comes closest to the old one of Cortot-Ronald. Modern recording, with its tonal richness and greater clarity by comparison adds much to one's enjoyment of the music. I like this recording. The piano is well blanced with the ensemble, permitting an even blend of those parts where it is not intended to be given the spotlight. (Too many pianists these days are given undue prominence in concerto recordings—quite unlike what we hear in a concert hall.) Particularly gratifying is the tone of the instrument. It has power and richness, and always the warmth of sound that Serkin obtains. This quality of realism is not similarly substantiated in older recordings. I think of the piano used by Myra Hess in her recording of this concerto, where the variety of nuance often lacks the full bloom of overtones. It is regrettable that Miss Hess did not have the benefit of a better orchestral part, for her performance would not be so greatly challenged.

There is a variance of expression in Ormandy's and Serkin's statement of the first theme, though later the conductor takes his cue from the pianist. While Serkin faithfully follows the composer's indications, he lacks some of the subtleties that Miss Hess contrives. The mood is fully attained by Serkin and this is most pleasingly observed

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at the opening of side 2. How wise the pianist is not to dramatize in the octave passages that follows. Ormandy handles the orchestra with great discretion, matching the beauties of sound of the pianist. This orchestral part is expressed with greater understanding than that of Steinberg in the recent Rubinstein set. I do not like the break at the end of side 3, it interrupts a mood which should be subordinated as in past recordings. The realistic piano tone in the cadenza, which is splendidly performed, deserves mention. The orchestral rejoinders in the second movement are well handled by Ormandy, and the playing is consistently lovely—especially in the strings. Serkin does not achieve quite the excitement that Arrau brought to the last movement, but he reveals some delicate shading of tone, and in the essentially lyrical passages his playing has an exquisite limpid quality. —P.H.R.



BLOCH: *String Quartet No. 2*; The Stuyvesant String Quartet. International Records set 302, four discs, price \$7.00.

▲Twenty-six years separate Bloch's two string quartets. The first dates from 1919 and the present from 1945. The vigor which characterizes all his music has not abated, nor has passion spent, yet a greater intellectuality has injected itself. The ideals and aspirations of his race, voiced so often in his music, are expressed with a greater universality of spirit. In this work Bloch reveals a deeper absorption with the academic style which was first evidenced in his *Concerto Grosso* (1924).

When this quartet was first played in England in 1946, Ernest Newman said, it "is, in my opinion, the finest work of our time in this genre, one that is worthy to stand beside the last quartets of Beethoven". This is just praise. I, who have been deeply stirred by this music, feel that it is the work of a man who, though not shut-in by deafness, has in his chosen life of the hermit been profoundly moved in his solitary thinking. The quartet is in four movements, the first of which tends to be a formal introduction. Newman states that from a source motive

"in the second of the four movements (the scherzo) there comes into being an entity which from that point onward moulds the whole quartet from the inside into a single organic substance". Newman makes no mention of the quasi-oriental theme in the solo violin's opening bar, which though never developed becomes an integral part of the work. It ends the first, third and fourth movements, besides being repeated within them. Rhythmically the four movements are fascinating in their alterations of pattern and tempi and the independence of the part-writing is of absorbing interest. (A score is available, published by Boosey and Hawkes, for those who enjoy following the music.)

There is a thoughtful, questing character in the substance and style of the opening movement with its independence of polyphony and its sorrow-laden unison chords. It builds from a subdued mood to a piercing wail which is quickly recalled as though a resignation of spirit prevailed. The scherzo has only a hint of the old primitive quality, yet there is youthful power in its vigorous scoring. It is twice broken up by slow sections where the disposition of the emotional drama is consoling. The slow movement develops the source theme in first one instrument and then another with a syncopated accompaniment by the other strings. The pattern varies with shifting basic rhythms. The opening theme returns, softly like a compassionate lament, three times in the middle of the movement and at the end. The finale is the longest and most elaborate movement. It begins in vigorous style with the opening theme being given new significance. The freedom of the mood suddenly breaks and the music takes on a formal concision with the unison statement of the source motive as the basis for a forceful and elaborate pas-sacaglia. This leads into a mighty fugue, again using the source theme in different rhythm. The work ends in an epilogue of poetic calmness—its serenity of mood supplying a wonderful experience after the preceding emotional turbulence.

The Stuyvesant String Quartet, who previously performed the composer's first quartet on records (Columbia set 392), play this music with unmistakable fervor and conviction. Theirs is a performance of technical resourcefulness and emotional vehemence. The recording is excellent.

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BRAHMS: Quintet in B minor, Op. 115; The Stuyvesant String Quartet and Alfred Gallodoro (clarinet). International Records set 303, (automatic), four discs, price \$7.00.

▲Brahms posed a problem in instrumental balance in this score. The clarinet does not lend itself with the string quartet as it does with the piano. Usually in this work, the clarinetist is treated as a soloist (reminiscent of the concerto style) and the perfect blend of the wind instrument with the strings is seldom attained. Here, an effort to balance parts has been made with the result that the excellent clarinetist is often, not improperly, submerged in the ensemble. I cannot remember a more intimate performance of this beautiful work, perhaps too intimate—for while it accentuates the infinite tenderness of the music—those characteristic moments of Brahms' rugged strength are not sufficiently brought out. It should be remembered that the primary use of chamber music

with Brahms was domestic. He thought of its "performance by players for their own delectation as much as for that of a possible audience", and in this rendition of the clarinet quintet the unmistakable pleasure in the content of the score is conveyed by the players. It is as though they said "let us enjoy the moment for ourselves". Apparently, the microphone offered them no incentive to challenge other versions.

One returns to the old Charles Draper—Lener Quartet version (excised Columbia set 118) for similar refinement of clarinet playing. The Reginald Kell—Busch Quartet version (Victor set 491) offers a more rhapsodic treatment of the clarinet part. Each performance in its own way advantageously serves the composer and reflects an individuality of artistry on the part of the players. It is interesting to find the present group, the youngest in years to record the quintet, giving such artistic interpretation of the retrospective character of this epilogue of

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—John Ball, Jr. in *Records for Pleasure*, published by the Rutgers University Press.
(Mr. Ball is record reviewer for the New York World Telegram, music editor of the Brooklyn Eagle and writes program notes for the Columbia Recording Corporation.)

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Brahms' chamber music. For Brahms in this quintet looked back over the years and the wisdom of his maturity gave new expression to the songful bent of his youth though age tinged it with wistful melancholy. And it is that plaintive quality which predominates in this performance. In the lovely slow movement with its longdrawn melody, its muted strings, and its sweetly sad clarinet passages of beauty and poignancy, the playing captivates. Gallodoro merits praise for the delicacy of his tone and the first violinist deserves commendation for not accentuating his own part in the dialogue between his instrument and the clarinet.

My advice is to hear this performance and compare it with Kell-Busch Quartet version. The recording is excellently contrived and the surfaces, save for an inch or so at the opening of several sides, are smooth.

BRAHMS: *Sonata in F major, Op. 99* (7 sides); and **NARDINI** (arr. Salmon): *Lento* from *Sonata in C major* (1 side); Gregor Piatigorsky (cello) and Ralph Berkowitz (piano). Columbia set M or MM-590, price \$5.85.

▲Brahms' development in his chamber music art is nowhere more strikingly revealed than in the two cello sonatas. Twenty-one years separate them—the first in *E minor* was published in 1866 and this one in 1887. Comparing the two, the accomplishment of craftsmanship is immediately noted in the *F major*. Each part is effective in itself, and the blend and balance of the instruments is most satisfactorily achieved. The composer's inspiration flows freely and abundantly, with unmistakable exuberance. The work was a product of a summer spent at Thun, Switzerland, reflecting the happiness that the composer found in that lovely countryside. The opening movement has a pastoral quality, and the slow one is a lyrical song. The scherzo cleverly demonstrates the technical resources of the cello except in the songful trio. The finale is a rondo of folk-like character.

Exactly ten years ago, Victor released a performance of this work by Casals and Horszowski (set 401), which for some strange reason is no longer included in the catalogue. Considering the high quality of the performance and that both artists were in top form with recording exceptionally fine, this

deletion can hardly be condoned. It is unlikely that those possessing the Casals set would relinquish it in favor of this new one. But those unfamiliar with the Casals can be grateful for this new and splendidly recorded performance, for Piatigorsky brings eloquence and beauty of tone to his performance. He is reputedly one of the masters of his instrument and commands our fullest respect. While Berkowitz is a musicianly and proficient pianist, he is less of the true co-partner than was Horszowski. Columbia's engineers have effected a fine balance between the two instruments. —P.H.R.

SMETANA: *Aus der Heimat, No. 1*; and **DVORAK** (arr. Kreisler): *Slavonic Fantasy in B minor*; Mischa Elman (violin) and Wolfgang Rosé (piano). Victor disc 12-0241, price \$1.25.

▲The Smetana is the first of two duets for violin and piano which the composer wrote in his last years. With its yearning sentiment it suggests folk influence. It was written after the composer's affliction when, as he said, so many tunes whirled in his head. It is an attractive piece, quite unpretentious but melodically poised and not at all banal. The Kreisler fantasy, opening with *Songs my Mother Taught Me*, is neither one thing or another. The juxtaposition of the melodic material is open to debate. Undoubtedly, my reaction to the music leaves me unimpressed by Mr. Elman's performance, in which the shaping of the song melody does not have the same appeal as the human voice. The noted violinist's occupation with the Smetana is more rewarding for he plays expressively without stressing sentiment. Good recording. —J.N.



FIELD: *Nocturne in E major (Midi)*, and *Nocturne in E minor*; Dennis Matthews (piano). Columbia disc 72525-D, price \$1.25.

▲To John Field's nocturnes Chopin and his followers owe much of their inspiration. Field (1782-1837) was a gifted pianist and

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composer. His compositions are classified as forming a link between the later Clementi, with whom he studied, and Chopin. These nocturnes are delightfully intimate salon music, and the sparkling character of the *E major*, in rondo form, conjures visions of an 18th-century drawing room with its glittering crystal chandeliers. It is appropriately named "Mid-Day" when sunlight lends an elative brilliance, though the sub-title may be regarded as a misnomer. The quiet, wistful qualities of the *E minor* suggest the early hours of evening—no lights but shifting shadows as yet unobscured by darkness. The sensitive musicianship of Dennis Matthews is fittingly employed in these simple and effective pieces, where the dynamics are moderate. Indeed, the *E minor* is almost a study in *pianissimo*. The recording is excellent.


SCHUMANN: *Sonata in F minor, Op. 14 (Concerto without Orchestra)*: Leonard Shure (piano). Vox set 189, three discs, price \$5.25.

▲ This work, Schumann's third piano sonata, written just before his masterpiece—the *Fantasia, Op. 17*, seems to have been largely an experiment, lacking the charm of the previous sonatas. The sub-title, *Concerto without Orchestra*, supplied by the publisher may be self-explanatory but gives rise to conjectures as to what an added orchestra might have done. Temperament here is uneven, the fervor of the first movement is not upheld: there is more than a suggestion that pre-occupation with form circumvented its best interests. The scherzo is attractive, but the Variations based on a theme of Clara Wieck lack true spontaneity. The whole work has a scholarly rather than inspirational urge, and does not sustain interest like the more attractive *G minor Sonata*.

Leonard Shure's performance is smooth flowing and technically proficient. It is earnest rather than impassioned playing. In the first movement, there is logic in his effort for consistency of mood rather than emphasizing the passages of "wild momentum". One senses the pianist has real affection for the music and the fine recording conveys this to the listener. The record surfaces are exceptionally smooth for piano reproduction.

—P.H.R.

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SMETANA: *Polkas in F major, in A minor, in F sharp major, in F minor, and in E flat major*; Erno Balogh (piano). Vox set 179, three 10-inch discs, price \$3.00.

▲Balogh, a pupil of Bartok and Kodaly, often performs Smetana's polkas in his concerts. "They fit well under the hands and convey accurately the spirit of Bohemian music," he says. "Moreover, they have an ingratiating style about them." What Chopin did for the mazurka, Smetana did for his national dance, the polka, for in recreating these dance patterns into an art form the composer kept their rhythmic fascination and gave them added charm in variations of mood. Balogh plays them with technical fluency and expressive warmth. I have a feeling that those who acquire this set will find themselves returning often to the music which, though national in character, is not in the least provincial. The recording is quite satisfactory though some surfaces are a bit intrusive.

—J.N.



BRAHMS: *Ein Deutsches Requiem, Op. 45*; James Pease (bass), Eleanor Steber (soprano), RCA Victor Chorale and Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Robert Shaw. Victor set DM-1236, nice discs, price \$12.25 (manual set \$13.25) or set V-20 (vinylite), price \$19.00 (manual \$20.00).

BRAHMS: *Ein Deutsches Requiem, Op. 45*; Elisabeth Schwarzkopf (soprano), Hans Hotter (baritone), the Singverein der Gesellschaft der Musik Freunde in Wien with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Herbert von Karajan. Columbia set MM-755, ten discs, price \$15.50.

▲It seems a pity that two such rewarding sets are issued almost simultaneously, for each is a fine performance. It seems a greater pity that the Shaw presentation, one of the best he has accomplished for the phonograph, is over-shadowed by the Viennese one. For behind Shaw's version lie three years of preparation, begun following a performance of the work he gave during the season of 1945-46. The actual recording, ac-

complished in November 1947, followed weeks of intensive rehearsals by chorus and soloists. How much time and preparation went into the von Karajan performance is not disclosed. Nor does the time element concern us, rather the representation which is a wholly inspired one.

Both sets arrive too late for detailed discussion, and the brief hearing of each does not permit expatiation. That the Viennese singers and chorus are the most communicative is not surprising since the language of the work is theirs and the spirit of the music by inheritance very close to their hearts. That von Karajan reveals a truer insight to the music is perhaps traceable to his German heritage. All things being equal, however, it must be said that the Victor engineers have done a more notable job of recording. But more on this next month after we have had ample opportunity to make detailed comparisons.

BYRD: *Sacerdotes Domini; Non vos reliquam orphanos; Justorum animae* (Motets); sung by the Harvard Glee Club and the Radcliffe Choral Society, conducted by G. Wallace Woodworth, and *Miserere* and *Fantasia* (keyboard pieces), Putnam Aldrich (harpsichord). Technichord set T-11, three discs, price \$5.75.

▲The Latin Church music of Byrd ranks among his greatest work. E. H. Fellows in Oxford's *Heritage of Music, Vol. II*, says that "Byrd was a man of austere disposition, and he was at his best in treating subjects of a serious or contemplative character." His *Ave Verum* (recorded by the Fleet Street Choir — English Decca K1018) and his *Justorum animae* are cited as among his tenderest expressions of his faith. Yet *Non vos reliquam* remains equally impressive in its apprehension of the solacing character of the words from St. John — "I will not leave you comfortless: I go away and come again to you." What Alec Robertson said in *The Gramophone* in his review of the *Ave Verum* can be repeated in the case of all three of these motets: "It is a most moving expression of religious emotion, the music of a man who believes." In this day and age of scoffers and disbelievers, the religious music of the old masters brings comfort and a true spiritual uplift. There is a welcome serenity of spirit allied to a poignancy of expression, which Byrd realizes in a noble manner.

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Most of Byrd's keyboard music was written for domestic usage. Though less intimate than his choral music, its interweaving parts are effectively contrived with a nobility of purpose. His *Miserere*, based on melodies from the Gregorian liturgy, is more austere than his *Fantasia* inasmuch as the free style of the latter permits more decorative work.

The chorus, under the guiding spirit of its director, is expressive and emotionally persuasive. Mr. Putnam handles the keyboard music expertly. The reproduction is very lifelike with a brilliancy on the high end which can be advantageously cut down. The admirable booklet provides relevant notes on the music, translations of the motets, recording characteristics and miniature scores of all compositions.

MOZART: Requiem, K. 626; EIAR Orchestra and Chorus, Pia Tassinari (soprano), Ebe Stignani (contralto), Ferruccio Tagliavini (tenor), Italo Tajo (bass), Victor de Sabata (conductor). Cetra-Soria set 101 (automatic), eight discs, price \$15.70.

▲I heard the original Italian pressing of this set in a record booth in a New York shop, and owing to the inferior quality of the Italian shellac pressings was not impressed. Under such circumstances it is difficult to get a true perspective on a performance, particularly a work of this character. The present set was dubbed for domestic Cetra-Soria to permit realization of an automatic sequence and to clear up some tonal diffusion existent in the original version. There is no question that the dubbing is an improvement, with the exception of sides 1 and 9 where a tonal fluttering is still noted. Moreover, the quality of the present records is better than the originals, and one is better able to access the performance.

It has become increasingly apparent that the name Victor de Sabata on a record promises a performance of unusual merit, and in the case of this work it becomes a consistent fact. This set has a history. It was recorded on December 5, 1941 in Rome at the Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli in commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of Mozart's death. The acoustical properties of the Basilica are quite remarkable and the balance of parts are effectively contrived. Not since the famous Christschall set, made

in Salzburg around 1930, have we had as impressive a rendition. Beside these two, the Harl McDonald-Victor set seems almost amateurish and definitely prosaic. Comparing this new set with the old Christschall, one is amazed at the impressive quality of the older reproduction. Perhaps some may feel that de Sabata's wider range of dynamics borders on the theatrical, yet his dramatic intensity is not misapplied in this music in which more than a suggestion of Mozart's operatic style is present. Moreover, the articulated direction of the Italian conductor is as highly affecting as it is revealing of a searching musicianship.

The soloists in both the Christschall and this new set are uneven, but de Sabata has chosen the finest voices. The late Richard Mayr and the tenor, Hermann Gallos, in the older set were the only top-notch artists. Tassinari and Tajo are stylistically the most impressive of the present quartet, but the singing of Tagliavini and Stignani though infected by operatic tendencies is tonally pleasing. The excellently trained orchestra and chorus of the Italian radio acquit themselves admirably.

The controversies that have raged over how much of the *Requiem* is Mozart, and how much is Suessmayr — his pupil who completed the composition after the composer's death, is irrelevant to the listener's enjoyment. The controversy and speculation have always been "distinctly out of harmony with the unquestionable greatness of the music", as A Veinus said in his article on the work in our April 1940 publication (an issue still available to interested readers).

—P.H.R.

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▲The best excuse for this album is the fact that Miss Pons has never before been so well recorded — and a good excuse it is, for the reproduction is superb by any standard. However, every item in the set not only has been recorded before (all but one rather frequently) but each has been done by Miss Pons herself. And — here is the catch — it will not be surprising if some admirers of the older recordings find the singing in the new ones disappointing. Despite her position as the world's most fêted coloratura soprano, it has never been my feeling that her best assets were matters of technical brilliance. Many heavier voices before the public today can (and do) dispense smoother, less fluttery scales than she, and surely in the higher flights greater security of intonation is essential to first rate singing. No, it is in more lyrical vocalism that Miss Pons excels most singers of her school, and we may regret that she has been so thoroughly "typed" that it seems unlikely she will ever fully develop her potential in expressive song.

Of the four arias, I have had the opportunity to compare only one with her earlier essay, and here the Pons admirer is faced with an even choice. In Victor M-756, released some seven years ago, the vocal line which she brought to Gretry's *Fauvette* is smoother than in the new Columbia, but she sings to the accompaniment of a quintet — neither this nor the too-full orchestration of Mr. Kostelanetz is precisely what the composer ordered. By way of compensation for the better controlled singing, we can, in the new recording, practically feel the presence of the *prima donna*. And it should be added, the quality of the voice itself has not lost its charm. —P.L.M.

POULENC: *Petites Voix* — 1. *La petite fille sage* (*The Good Little Girl*), 2. *Le Chien perdu* (*The Lost Dog*), 3. *En rentrant de l'école* (*While Returning from School*), 4. *Le petit garçon malade* (*The Little Sick Boy*), *Le*

herisson (*The Hedgehog*); RCA Victor Chorale conducted by Robert Shaw. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1409, price \$1.00.

▲Poulenc has written a most attractive group of "a capella" miniatures for female voices. These reflect the thoughts of adolescent minds. It is a great pity that the words to these charmingly simple songs are not provided with the record, for the relation of text to music is inseparable. Too, Shaw's sensitive direction would be better appreciated. As one listens to the many tonal nuances of the choir, the failure to comprehend a word of the text — in music of this kind — disconcerts. The excellent recording is marred by a high surface sound.

PUCCINI: *La Bohème* (complete); Bidu Sayao (Mimi); Richard Tucker (Rudolfo); Salvatore Baccaloni (Benoît and Alcindoro); Mimi Benzell (Musetta); Francesco Valentino (Marcello); George Cehanovsky (Schaunard); Lodovico Oliviero (Parpignol); Nicola Moscona (Colline); Lawrence Davidson (Sergeant); Metropolitan Opera Chorus and Orchestra, conducted by Giuseppe Antonicelli. Columbia set OP or MOP-27, thirteen discs, price \$19.95.

▲Supplementing the editor's comments on this set, I tally his use of the adjective "respectable" in describing the performance. I have heard in recent years at the Metropolitan Opera House performances far less competent than this one. What a pity the phonograph was not used in the hey-day of this famous opera house to record for posterity some of the truly great performances of *La Bohème* it formerly sponsored. Today, from what I hear, opera — all over the world — is being produced in much the same manner as the Metropolitan with uneven casts. Hence, the present performance can be accepted as a standard of what we might encounter almost anywhere. Comparing it with the Italian version of *La Traviata*, made at Rome, which Columbia issued a while back, I find honors about even. Neither cast is an ideal one. Yet in both all members are acceptable and quite efficient in their respective roles.

The star of this occasion is Bidu Sayao — one of the loveliest, contemporary interpreters of Mimi. Though she deserved a

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more experienced partner, Mr. Tucker's Rudolfo is nonetheless surprisingly good. His singing is always tonally agreeable though he lacks at this point of his career sufficient spontaneity to give his characterization distinction. Valentino's voice seems a bit weighty for Marcello — who was a blither fellow than he makes him. Neither Tucker nor Valentino points up his text as a true Italian, and one misses the subtle inflections of line that Gigli and Poli produce. Miss Brenzell is less strident than most Musettas and quite an efficient young artist. Moscona handles Colline competently. Where the performance fails to compete with the recent *Traviata* is in the orchestral playing. Bellezza's direction in the former set was superb throughout, while that of Antonicelli more admirable in pace than in spirit. On the evidence of the record, one gets the impression that the orchestra of the Rome Opera House is a better one than the present Metropolitan.

The performance gets better as it progresses. Sayao and Tucker are heard at their best in the third and fourth acts. The quality of the recording is consistently good, surprisingly well balanced and resonant considering its place of origin.

SACRED MUSIC: *Regina coeli* (Palestrina); *Jubilate Deo* (Lasso); *Ave Maria* (Vittoria); *Tu es Petrus* (Refice); *Acclamations* (Salute) (Refice); Roman Singers of Sacred Music from the Roman Vatican Choirs, conducted by Rt. Rev. Msgr. Licio Refice. Seva set 18, three 10-inch discs, price \$0.00.

SACRED MUSIC: *Incipit oratio hieremiae* (Palestrina); *Caudent in Coelis* (Vittoria); *Amavit eum Dominus* (Refice); *Ave Maria* (Bach-Gounod); *Exultate justi* (Viadona); Roman Singers of Sacred Music, conducted by Rt. Rev. Msgr. Refice. Seva set 19, three 10-inch discs, price \$0.00.

▲ This choir has been heard recently in this country by permission of the Pope. The group, comprising 54 voices, was chosen from the Sistine Chapel, St. Peter's, St. John's Laterna and Santa Maria Maggiore. The *Acclamations*, in the first album, is a piece especially used to introduce the choir — a sort of theme song unparalleled so far as I know in sacred music. Those who have heard the choristers and found appealing

their fervent singing — more dramatically intense than in previous Roman choir recordings — will undoubtedly welcome these discs. The Pope sanctioned the making of the records. —J.N.

SCHUBERT: *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen*, Op. 129. Dorothy Maynor, (soprano), David Oppenheim (clarinet) and George Schick (piano). Victor disc 12-0186, price \$1.25.

▲ *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen*, actually rather a concert aria than a song, may have been Schubert's last vocal composition. There is no question that it belongs to the year of his death. It owes its existence to the soprano Anna Milder-Hauptmann, whose genuine admiration for the composer's deeper and more characteristic songs was tempered by her desire for a vehicle to display her exceptional voice. It remains today a useful repertoire piece in which an agile soprano voice can match qualities with a clarinet. The text is a mixture of Wilhelm Müller (poet of both *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Die Winterreise*) and Helmine von Chezy (best remembered for her play *Rosamunde*, for which Schubert provided incidental music). It is not a too consequential picture of the shepherd who sits on the rock looking forward to the coming of spring which shall reunite him with his beloved. Done with-

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out cuts (which it seldom is) the piece is a bit over-long—for a double twelve-inch record hardly possible.

There have been a number of recordings. First in the field, so far as I know, was Lotte Schöne (HMV D 2004) who sang to an orchestration by Reinicke. Her soft cooing voice and unstrained style gave the disc an unique attractiveness, yet it has long since been missing from the lists. Elisabeth Schumann provided a replacement (Victor 14815) full of brightness, roguery and sparkle, but it too has yielded its place in the catalog. Isobel French (Technichord 1129) and Winifred Cecil (Cetra CC 2153) contributed less easily accessible versions, and a more recent one by Margaret Ritchie (HMV C 3688) has been much admired. As for Miss Maynor, hers is a curious effort. The voice quality is in its way quite lovely, and there are no breeches of musical decorum in her performance; yet I have never heard a more complete failure to project the words of a song. This will hardly take the place of the admirable Schumann disc. —P.L.M.

SCOTT (arr. Liza Lehmann): *Annie Laurie*; and FOSTER: *Gentle Annie*; Robert Merrill (baritone) with piano accompaniment by Leila Edwards. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1408, price \$1.00.

▲Mr. Merrill adopts a slow and a rather metronomic pace in both these songs, giving them a doleful quality. There should be more of a lift in "Annie Laurie" and a less detached air in the Foster song. The baritone fails to create the impression of having intimately known either young lady.

WAGNER: *Die Meistersinger* — *Mein Kind (Aria and Quintet)*; Polyna Stoska (soprano), Herbert Janssen (baritone), Torsten Ralf (tenor), Herta Glaz (contralto), John Garris (tenor), the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, conducted by Max Rudolph. Columbia disc 72518-D, price \$1.25.

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▲This is the music which ends the first half of the last act of *Die Meistersinger*, beginning with Hans Sachs' reply to Eva who — in her aria, *O Sachs Mein Freund* — has told him "were her choice free 'twould fall on him" since through him she grew and flourished. "My child," sings Sachs, "of Tristan and Isolde I know a grievous tale; Hans Sachs was prudent and did not desire the fate of King Marke." The music appropriately repeats from *Tristan* the theme associated with Isolde's Magic. The scene which follows is the christening of the apprentice David to the rank of Journeyman. This leads into the famous quintet in which Eva begins by expressing her happiness and Sachs sings of the secret "that must remain forever in his heart". The choice of Sachs' reply to Eva as a beginning seems an awkward one, because it is closely associated with her previous aria. The latter is inseparable from this scene.

The singing in this record is rather cautious. Janssen portrays the benignity of Sachs but vocally he is not as affecting as Schorr. Both Ralf and Glatz are submerged in the ensemble of the quintet. Stoska surprisingly reveals more freedom of impulse while bringing a tonal loveliness to her part. Mr. Rudolf's efficient orchestral direction leaves one with the impression that the singers' eyes were constantly focussed on his baton. Fine recording.

WAGNER: *Tannhaeuser* — *Blick ich umher*, and *O du mein holder Abendstern*; Joel Berglund (baritone) with orchestra, conducted by Leo Blech. Victor disc 12-0185, price \$1.25.

▲No one in recent years at the Metropolitan has given more expressive performances of these essentially lyrical arias of Wolfram. This baritone is a gifted Wagnerian artist. Comparing his "Eulogy of Love" with the Goritz performance, issued by Victor in its Heritage series last month, makes the latter seem almost like a caricature. Berglund's poised singing in the long phrases of the familiar "Evening Star" dissipates memories of past performances. The baritone is fortunate in the fine orchestral direction of Blech and natural sound of the reproduction. —J.N.

DRAMA

CARROLL-ADDINSELL: *Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*; by Lewis Carroll, from the stage adaptation by Eva Le Gallienne and Florida Friebus; starring Eva Le Gallienne, Margaret Webster, Richard Waring, Hugh Franklin and and Bambi Linn, with members of the American Repertory Theatre production; music by Richard Addinsell; orchestra conducted by Tibor Kozma. Victor set K13, six 12-inch discs, price \$7.00.

▲A more better projection of this famous fancy which grew curiouser and curiouser could not be imagined, even if one tried with both hands. If another Alice object that you don't imagine with your hands, I must recourse to the Red Queen's rebuke: "Nobody said you did: I said you couldn't if you tried."

Nor if one tried with both his hands and all his feet, could he imagine a better story to project in a juvenile album. The combination of perfect story with perfect production by Miss Le Gallienne makes this set an insistent *must* for every record library where hearts are young and fancies nimble. Indeed, it is the best "Alice" on records.

This is the most ambitious child's set to date. Previously the best juvenile sets have been short originals like *Irving, the Unemployed Horse*. Adaptations for records (a fancy term for extensive rewriting and wholesale abbreviations) have largely failed to do justice to the classic fairy stories. This album, however, has even more than a splendid story and comparable adaptation. It has the flawless production, ease and timing impact which come from months of public performance—almost as if every day of its long New York engagement were one more rehearsal for records.

The album benefits from the impressive casting and lavish production undertaken for the stage. Accordingly, those who feel that the set is too expensive are invited to reflect that album ideas of similar calibre do not at present originate with record companies for the very reason that costs are prohibitive. This set is, then, not only a bargain from RCA Victor but a gift from those gods known as Thespians.

Here are both of Alice's marvelous dreams

mingling into one and containing the classic essence of both volumes. On a purely technical plane alone, the sheer amount of Carroll's wayward wit which has been retained by the adaptors is astounding. Yet so perfect is its presentation that almost every child will be encouraged to follow Alice's adventures from beginning to end in the books themselves, to gobble up those gay crumbs which had to make way for those even gayer.

And were children to enjoy only the books, how much (of Carroll's delightful "muchness") would they miss in missing the nuanced narration of Miss Le Gallienne, the fun in Margaret Webster's Red Chess Queen (who is Dame Edith Evans' arch Lady Bracknell reconstructed in Wonderland) that modest, groove-fitting music of Richard Addinsell in the merry manner of Sir Arthur Sullivan. They could have no finer, sweeter afternoon that that with Bambi Linn's exquisitely articulated, faun-like Alice—half Disney and half Debussy.

Critics who see in Lewis Carroll a prophetic paraphrase of James Joyce and marvel at the Swift *entendre* would do better to analogize in terms of Shakespeare, for Carroll, too, is unique and towers above all others in his field. One feels he will never be surpassed, and there is as much food for epigraph in him as for thought.

Like the creator of Hamlet he had an ear for the madness with method in it, and he would sell short his most serious line for an immortal pun. The creator of the Archbishop of Canterbury in *Henry V* would have appreciated a Mouse who—after a

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girl has got wet in a pool of her own tears — seeks to dry her off with “the driest thing” he knows, an English History recitation about William the Conqueror and the “Northumbrians.” The creator of *A Tempest* would find less curiouseer and less curiouseer any country where one had to keep running and running just to stay where one was. And surely he whose Lady Macbeth gilded the faces of the grooms withal so that it might “seem their guilt” would get an immense boot out of a Queen who introduces Alice to a Leg of Mutton and then will not let her slice it because “It isn’t etiquette to cut anyone you’ve been introduced to.” —Robert D. Olson

In The Popular Vein

by Enzo Archetti

Great Scott! Hazel Scott, with Rhythm Accompaniment. Columbia Album C-159, 4-10" discs.

● The beautiful sepia exponent of subtle swing has at last been given a chance to display her art on records and the result is just what was to be expected: delightful! There is a charming intimacy in her piano solos and a personal appeal in her soft singing. The numbers suit her style perfectly: *Soon* (from “Mississippi”), *Love Me or Leave Me*, *Love Will Find A Way* (from “Shuffle Along”), *Emaline*, *Mary Lou*, *Dancing On the Ceiling* (from “Evergreen”) and her own *Brown Bee Boogie* and *Nightmare Blues*. A small rhythm group accompanies her modestly.

Originals; Alvy West and The Little Band (Personnel: Alvy West, sax; Robert Caudana, accordion; Larry Neill, trumpet; Louis Paonessa, drums; Trefoni Rizzi, electric guitar; Arthur Shapiro, bass.) Columbia Album C-152, 4-10" discs.

● Alvy West didn’t cut much of a figure when he went under his real name of Weisfeld. But a change in name and a switch to a smooth, bouncy, singing style, cut to order for a small band, soon put him at the top. The secret is the singing style. It is Alvy West’s contention that if the piece can’t be sung, it’s not worth doing. And his instruments sing, even in such purely dance pieces as *Hop*, *Skip and Jump* and *Uncle Samba*. All numbers in this album are West compositions. His arrangements are by a singularly fresh and appealing economy — no pretense, and by their sweet and unusual sound. This is certainly something new in music, in this day of elaborate arrangements.

Doc Evans’ Dixieland Five; Doc Evans Ensemble (Personnel: Doc Evans, cornet; Ed Hubble, trombone; Tony Parenti, clarinet; Joe Sullivan, piano; George Wettling, drums). Disc Album 715, 4-10" discs.

● This is the second volume by a group which succeeds in recreating jazz as it was played in the beginning. The numbers, too, are from way back: *Bugle Call Rag*, *Tin Roof Blues*, *That Dada Strain*, *That’s A Plenty*, *Farewell Blues*, and *Panama Rag*. If you haven’t been spoiled by big band jazz, you’ll enjoy the simplicity of these pieces, played with honest drive. If only the recording and surfaces matched the excellence of the music and playing!

Nellie Lutcher; Capitol Album CC70, 3-10" discs.

Fine Brown Frame and Pig Latin Song; Capitol 15032.

The Lady’s In Love With You and Hurry On Down; Capitol 40002.

My Mother’s Eyes and You Better Watch Yourself, Bub; Capitol A-40042.

Let Me Love You Tonight and He’s A Real Gone Guy; Capitol 40017.

He Sends Me and Come and Get It, Honey; Capitol 15064. Nellie Lutcher and Her Rhythm.

● A real gone gal — who in a year’s time has jumped from an obscure position as an entertainer to top shelf. A rough, uneven, often tone-less singer, who packs a terrific wallop in rhythm and expression, accompanying herself on piano and alternating her singing with keyboard solos which defy description. Throughout her piano playing she hums and sings in a breathless manner very much like Lionel Hampton. The effect is that of irrepressible enthusiasm communicating itself infectiously to the listener.

The album contains three of her own works: *Chi-Chi-Chi-Chicago*, *There’s Another Mule In Your Stall*, and *Lake Charles Boogie*. The other three are: *The One I Love Belongs To Somebody Else*, Irving Berlin’s *Reaching For the Moon*, and Eric Coates’ *Sleepy Lagoon* but they could just as well have been written by her because she recreates them in her own unique way. The singles are coupled in the same way and they are every bit as good as those in the album — but especially *Fine Brown Frame* and *He’s A Real Gone Guy*! Her own works remain best because they are part of her and she really gives!

It took Capitol a while to wake up to the worth of this artist. Her first records (and some of these in this group) were issued under the American label without too much fanfare. Then, when the public acclaims opened its eyes, her recording immediately appeared under the purple label. Regardless of this, Capitol did well by her with first class engineering.

It wouldn’t be fair to close these comments without a word about “and Her Rhythm.” They remain unidentified but their presence is hardly insignificant.

Shuffle Woogie and Bebop Blues; Capitol 40071. *Strato-Cruiser and Sunday Blues*; Capitol 40052. *No-Name Boogie and Hit the Block*; Capitol 40101. Joe Lutch's Jump Band.

●I haven't learned yet just what relation Joe Lutch is to Nellie Lutch but one thing they have in common: a swell sense of rhythm. There similarity ends. Joe's style has more polish — less spontaneity, compared with Nellie's. But by himself has enough rhythm and style for three musicians. His forte seems to be the blues. *Strato* is "modern jazz", that is, it exploits new harmonies and tonal combinations — not too successfully, in spite of the terrific rhythm. *Shuffle* is a good jump number. Joe's vocalizing reminds one of James Rushing. In the *Boogie*, Joe's alto sax, Karl George's trumpet, and Bill Ellis' tenor sax, as well as Joe's voice are featured.

Robbins' Nest and Just About This Time Last Night; Claude Thornhill and His Orchestra. Vocals by Fran Warren. Columbia 38136. *Robbins' Nest and Your Red Wagon*; Count Basie and His Orchestra. Vocal by James Rushing. Victor 20-2677. *Robbins' Nest and Tacos, Enchilados and Beans*; Sam Donahue and His Orchestra. Vocal by Shirley Lloyd. Capitol 493.

●A smooth melody with solid rhythm, just right for jazz variations, is *Robbins' Nest*, which, incidentally, has nothing to do with robins, the misspelled label on the Basie disc notwithstanding. Actually, it's a Charles Thompson — Illinois Jacquet tribute to Fred Robbins. W.O.V.'s popular disc jockey.

As a piece of jazz, it's a knockout — not blatant or noisy with instrumentalists trying to blow each other over. It's smooth, relaxed, and it rocks. Claude Thornhill's is the neatest, and probably best for dancing, being built around his piano playing, which, at last, after many mediocre releases is again what it should be. Basie's has more punch, as was to be expected, but the piano playing is of the one-finger-peck, jumpy kind — the spotlight being on saxes and brass. The effect is splendid, in a different way from Thornhill's. Donahue's has punch, too, but not much originality in the arrangement. It sounds like the usual Hit-of-the-Week affair.

Both Thornhill and Basie flipovers are good, in their individual ways. The meaning of *Red Wagon* still escapes me but James Rushing's singing makes it easy to take. The Donahue reverse tries hard to be funny but it doesn't quite succeed. The recording in all three instances is above reproach.

Keep Me In Mind and Scratch My Back; Buddy Greco and The Sharps (Personnel: Buddy Greco, vocal and piano; Don Sgro, bass; Frank Beecher, guitar). Musicraft 548.

●The dying duck manner of singing Buddy adopts in *Keep Me In Mind* will lose him many followers, but the light, breezy comedy style he uses in *Scratch My Back* will probably win them right back. That's his real *metier*! Especially, with such swell support.

We Just Couldn't Say Goodbye and What Do I Have To Do?; Musicraft 553. *Laroo, Laroo. Lilli Bolero and Hold It Joe*; Musicraft 546. Shep Fields and His Rippling Rhythm Orchestra. Vocals by Toni Arden and Bob Johnstone.

●Not too much emphasis on the rippling rhythm but a touch of it here and there to remind you that Fields hasn't forgotten the technique which made him famous. The first three are dance numbers, with some fine vocals. *Hold it Joe* is rumba with a comic touch. These discs are good bids on Fields' part to get back in the limelight.

Stars Fell On Alabama and Talking Is A Woman; Gordon Mac Rae, with Walter Gross and His Orchestra. Musicraft 556.

●*Talking* is a clever burlesque on Calypso. Good fun! With the reverse, though, Mac Rae is back in his more romantic vein. He has a pleasant light baritone and a dulcet style. The accompaniment is excellent — much better than the usual run for popular singers.

Army Air Corps and When You're Smiling; Skitch Henderson and His Orchestra. Capitol 501.

●The Army Air Corps march is a fooler. It is played, not as a rousing march, but as a rhapsody for piano and orchestra, with emphasis on the sentiment so that it sounds more like a nostalgic school song like the *Whiffenpoof Song* than an heroic march. The arrangement is admirable though hardly appropriate. The revival on the other side is quite undistinguished and the vocal by Irv Roth doesn't help any.

Beyond the Sea and All the Way; Harry James and His Orchestra. Vocal by Marion Morgan. Columbia 38134.

●*Beyond the Sea* is more Marion Morgan than Harry James, which is all wrong for a mood picture like this. The reverse, instead, is an all instrumental swing piece — a string of solos done *mezza-voce*, so to speak, at a spanking pace. Very fine until the all-out finale, which is a trifle blatant. Not the best Harry James has done but not his worst, either.

One Dozen Roses and No One But You; Hal Derwin and His Orchestra. Vocal by Hal Derwin and The Hi-Liters. Capitol 502.

●Hal has a voice and a way with songs like these — one with a pert lilt and the other rather languid. The Hi-Liters give him good background. The orchestra, too, but there is a peculiar passage in *No One But You* which could be a muted trumpet or a humming voice. I can't decide which. The tone is very strange.

Rendezvous With Peggy Lee; Peggy Lee, with Dave Barbour and His Orchestra. Capitol Album CC72, 3-10" discs. *A Nightingale Can Sing the Blues and There'll Be Some Changes Made*; Peggy Lee, with Frank DeVol and His Orchestra. Capitol 15001.

●The beautiful Peggy gives out with some rhythmic singing, in the album, of some old

favorites: *I Can't Give You Anything But Love*, *Them There Eyes*, *Stormy Weather*, *'Deed I Do*. One side is not familiar, *Why Don't You Do Right*, and it has bite and meaning. But the real surprise is Willard Robison's *Don't Smoke In Bed* — something you have never heard the like of before either from Robison or Peggy Lee. The accompaniment has punch, with Barbour's guitar well up front. The single is equal in interest to most of the numbers in the album except for the accompaniment.

I Don't Stand A Ghost Of A Chance With You (a) and *I Cover the Waterfront* (a); Musicraft 503. *Don't Blame Me* (a) and *Tenderly* (a); Musicraft 504. *Penthouse Serenade* (b) and *I've Got A Crush On You* (a); Musicraft 505. *Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child* (c) and *The Lord's Prayer* (Malotte) (c); Musicraft 539. *What A Difference A Day Made* (d) and *The One I Love* (c); Musicraft 552. Sarah Vaughn, with (a) George Treadwell's Orchestra; (b) Teddy Wilson Octet; (c) Ted Dale and Orchestra; (d) Jimmy Jones Quartet.

● Here is another girl with voice, style, and swell sense of rhythm also skyrocketed to fame in a brief time. Almost anything she does, she does well, infusing it with her dynamic personality, whether it be something soft and tender like *Tenderly*, or something flippant and peppy like *Love Me Or Leave Me*. But in Malotte's *Lord's Prayer* and in the spiritual *Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child* she doesn't ring true, being out of her element. Almost any other disc you pick from this group will be a sure bet, depending on your taste. *Penthouse Serenade* is outstanding, with the swell support from the Teddy Wilson Octet. In every instance, the recording is excellent.

Rhumba de Cuba; Chuy Reyes and His Hollywood Mocambo Orchestra. Vocals by Tony Martinez and Tony Gari. Capitol Album BD74, 4-10" discs.

● Not quite the neatness and finesse of Xavier Cugat but solid in rhythm. The numbers are: *La Ultima Noche*; *Barocoa*; *Boleando*; *Negra Leono*; *Hokey Joe* (from "This Time For Keeps"); *Almendra*; *Blen! Blen! Blen!*; and *La Yuca*. They invite the feet to dance. Plenty of piano, well to the fore. Recording — very full.

Music America Loves Best; Russ Case and His Orchestra. Victor Album P-210, 4-10" discs.

● A rather presumptuous title. The selections are *Caravan*, *Carioca*, *Jalousie*, *My Blue Heaven*, *Blue Skies*, *Smoke Gets In Your Eyes*, *Star Dust*, and *Indian Summer*, so, you see, there is plenty of room for disagreement. The treatment is all-orchestral, in the elaborate Kostelanetz style, with occasional returns to the originals in rhythm or spirit. Pleasant listening even if you don't agree with the choice made by Victor. *Star Dust* and *My Blue Heaven* are most successful, but *Caravan* has lost all of its Ellingtonian character.

The Desert Song; *Gems*; Earl Wrightson, baritone; Frances Greer, soprano; Jimmy Carroll, tenor; The Guild Choristers; and Al Goodman and His Orchestra. Victor Album K-12, 4-10" discs.

● This is from the same vineyard that produced *The Student Prince*, *Blossom Time*, etc., and the vintage is good. This panorama is every bit as fine as the previous ones: vocally, artistically, and technically. It seems hardly necessary to comment on each artist's contributions because their work is already so well known but you'll find Earl Wrightson's *One Alone* particularly thrilling. The chorus does sterling work throughout.

Smash Hits From Broadway; Marion Bell, soprano; Jimmy Carroll, tenor; Charles Fredericks, baritone; and Orchestra conducted by Thomas Lender Jones. Victor Album P-205, 4-10" discs.

● The title of this album is most appropriate for every number in it has proved itself a hit almost from opening night: *If I Loved You*, from "Carousel"; *How Are Things In Glocca Morra?* from "Finian's Rainbow"; *Almost Like Being In Love* from "Brigadoon"; *People Will Say We're In Love* from "Oklahoma"; *Strange Music* from "Song of Norway"; *I Still Get Jealous* from "High Button Shoes"; *They Say It's Wonderful* from "Annie Get Your Gun"; and *So Far* from "Allegro." All are splendidly sung as solos or duets, as called for, by fresh young voices supported by an alert orchestra. Incidentally, the album offers a good cross-section of Broadway for, at this writing; all these musical shows are active and playing to capacity houses.

Suspicion and Clabberin' Up For Rain; Jo Stafford with The Starlighters and Paul Weston's Mountain Boys. Capitol 15068.

● The luscious voiced Jo proves that she doesn't have to sing love or torch songs to make a hit. Both numbers are hillbilly ditties and she does them well, nasal twang and all. All good fun, if not exactly the genuine stuff. The support almost sounds authentic.

A Ghost Of A Chance and *Everyone Eats When They Come To My House*; Cab Calloway and His Orchestra. Columbia 38171.

● *Everyone Eats* is a typical Calloway patter. It's amusing the way names of people rhyme with the names of foods. Good fun at a lively jump pace. But the reverse is the real gem! It's all instrumental. Actually, it is a rhapsody for tenor sax with orchestra, with solid but discreet support from Cab's orchestra. The soloist is Chu Berry, of course, and he's seldom been heard in better form. Don't miss this record.

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Dance of the Persian Slaves from "Khovantchina"—Moussorgsky. Conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. 12-0239, \$1.25.

BERNSTEIN

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (1932)—Ravel. The Philharmonia Orchestra of London, Leonard Bernstein, pianist-conductor. DM-1209, \$4.75; DV-15, \$7.00.

DEFAUW

Water Music—Suite; Concerto Grosso No. 21, in D Minor, Op. 6, No. 10 and Largo (Xerxes: Act I)—Handel. Chicago Symphony Orchestra. John Weicher, Solo Violin. Album DM-1208, \$6.00.

ELMAN

Slavonic Fantasy in B Minor—Dvořák (Arranged by Fritz Kreisler) and *Aus der Heimat, No. 1* (From My Home)—Smetana. Wolfgang Rosé at the piano. Red Seal Record 12-0241, \$1.25.

KOUSSEVITZKY

Brandenburg Concerto No. 6, in B-flat—Bach. Boston Symphony Orchestra. (Recorded at Tanglewood, August, 1947.) Red Seal Album DM-1211, \$4.75.

FIEDLER

conducting the Boston "Pops" Orchestra. *The Moldau*—Smetana and *Husitská Overture*—Dvořák. DM-1210, \$4.75.

Orpheus in Hades: Overture—Offenbach. 12-0240, \$1.25.

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ITURBI

June (Barcarolle in G Minor) and *November* (Troïka en traineaux in E)—Tchaikovsky. Red Seal Record 12-0242, \$1.25.

MENUHIN

Symphonie Espagnole, Op. 21—Lalo. Performed with Orchestra Colonne, Jean Fournet, Conductor. Album DM-1207, \$6.00.

RODZINSKI

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MERRILL

Brooklyn Baseball Cantata—Stratton-Kleinsinger. With Russ Case and his Orchestra and Chorus. Album DC-42, \$3.00.

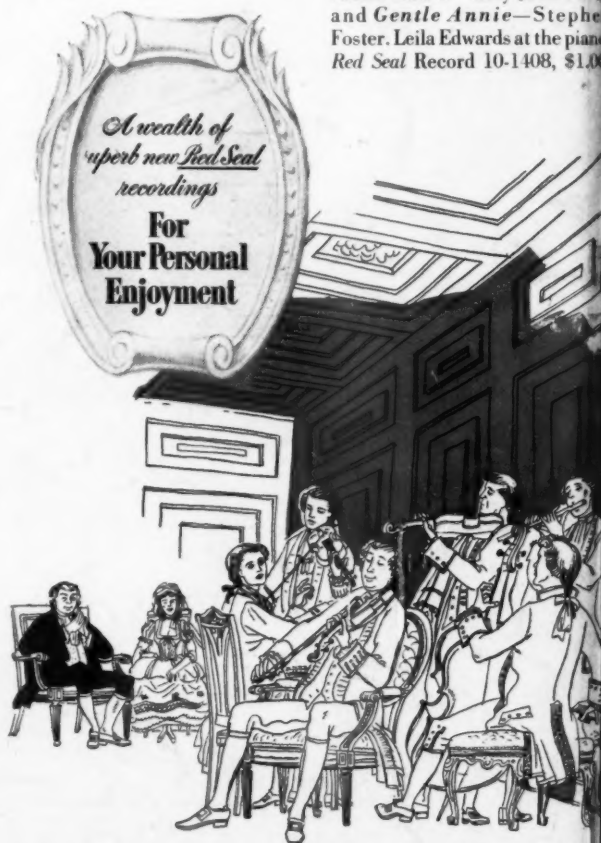
SHAW

Petites Voix—Madeleine Ley Poulenc. (Five selections.) RCA Victor Chorale. 10-1409, \$1.00.

WARREN

Sea Shanties—Traditional (arranged by Tom Scott). "Blow the Man Down," "Rio Grande," "The Drummer and the Cook," "Shenandoah," four others. With Orchestra and Chorus, Morris Levine, Conductor. MO-1186, \$3.00.

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